

A Quick Appraisal of the National Adult Education Programme in Gujarat

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A significant aspect of the National Adult Education Programme is the proposal to have a built-in mechanism for continuous evaluation which can help to monitor the pace, size and quality of the Programme as it is being translated into action and thereby assist in improving both planning and implementation. As a part of this strategy, a quick appraisal of the Programme in Gujarat State was recently carried out through the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad. A summary of the appraisal will, it is hoped, be of great value and interest to all workers in the field. The Ministry of Education & Social Welfare proposes to carry out similar evaluations in other areas of the country as well.

The State of Gujarat has come to be a fore-runner in the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP). The Gujarat Vidyapeeth, which has a vast experience of educational activities oriented to development, established the State Resource Centre in October, 1977, and played the role of a promoter of the Programme. It identified a number of voluntary agencies already engaged in constructive programmes and encouraged them to establish adult education centers (AECs). By July 1978, 47 voluntary agencies were running 2,818 AECs with an enrolment of 89,970 adult learners in 14 districts: these form 2.15 p.c. of the total adult illiterate population of 41.76 lakhs [age group 15-35] in the State. It was, therefore, felt that a quick appraisal of this Programme would provide a useful feedback to all concerned and the task was entrusted to the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmed-

abad. The limited objectives of the study were:

- to audit the data on the adult education centres;
- to examine the working of the adult education centres vis-a-vis the objectives of the National Adult Education Programme;
- to identify the strength and weakness of the adult education centres;
- to identify the factors responsible for the strength and weakness;
- to indicate the areas for action.

Methodology :

The 'universe' of the study was restricted to AECs which were opened before 15th April, 1978, and had thus functioned for about five to six months before the investigation. It involved 37 voluntary

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agencies and included 1,753 classes (with an enrolment of 56,718). Of this a ten percent random sample stratified according to voluntary agencies was drawn up for the study. This included 181 AECs of which 88.8 per cent were located in rural areas and 11.2 per cent in urban areas. But as 11 of these AECs had since closed down and could not be visited, the number of AECs actually studied was 169 with an enrolment of 5,468 [inclusive of drop-outs].

Questionnaires were addressed to all the 47 voluntary agencies [VAs] of whom 45 responded. Interviews were held with 169 instructors of AECs studied, 530 adult learners [against a target of three persons per AECs], and 65 drop-out (against a target of one drop-out per centre).

The team of investigators who actually visited the Centres consisted of 64 college teachers who volunteered to participate and 31 Government Officers [either Educational Inspectors or Assistant Inspectors] who were nominated for the purpose. They were all oriented to their work in two short seminars of two days each, held in September 1978. They were divided into 30 teams of one college teacher and a Government Officer and 34 individual teams consisting of only one college teacher each. Every team had to visit one to three Centres and complete its work within 15 days of the Orientation Seminar. Actually, the entire field work was over by the third week of October, 1978.

The Main Findings:

- 1) The records maintained by the voluntary agencies were neither upto-date,

nor comprehensive.

- 2) The average enrolment in the AECs was 32.4.
- 3) The number of days on which the classes were held in a month showed great variations: 3 classes met less than 15 times a month, 35 met between 20 and 25 times, 85 met between 20 and 25 times, and 44 met more than 25 times. No information could be had about two classes:
- 4) The average attendance found on the day of the actual visit was less [67.6 per cent], than shown in the attendance register. Even in this, some adults seemed to have been rounded up because there was advance intimation of the visit.
- 5) The level of drop-out showed a substantial variation between the Centres. While 73.96 per cent of the sample Centres did not have drop-outs, about 5 per cent had experienced the problem of drop-out ranging from 10 to 30 per cent of the total enrolment. The average drop-out level works out at 1.94 per cent of the total enrolment. Examining the data relating to the drop-outs, it was found that 49.2 per cent of the drop-out respondents left the AECs because of family circumstances and 10.8 per cent for economic reasons. It may be noted that 64.6 per cent of the drop-outs belonged to SC, ST and almost an equal percentage of them were associated with agriculture.
- 6) It is a matter of satisfaction to note that only 6.2 per cent of the sample AECs were not functioning at the

time of the field visit. The reasons, in detail, for closure or non-functioning of the Centres must be found out. The study did not provide for collecting data in this regard.

- 7) There did not appear to be any systematic arrangement for repeating courses for those who joined the AECs late, and yet several AECs admitted fresh students at later dates.
- 8) About 30 per cent of the sample AECs were organized for females only, about 40 per cent of them were organized for males only, and the remaining were organised for both sexes. Similarly, about 70 per cent of the AECs were organized for the weaker sections [48.5 per cent for ST, 10.1 per cent for other backward classes, 8.9 per cent for SC and 3 per cent for SC, OBC]. About 89 per cent of the sample AECs were functioning in rural areas. In view of the special emphasis being given to the weaker sections, females and rural population, it seems that the state government and the voluntary agencies have done a fairly commendable job. It must be pointed out, however, that there seem to be very few Centres showing the mix of ST/SC on the one hand and other social groups on the other. In fact, some investigators recorded in their diary that the high caste Hindu adult learners refused to participate in such AECs where the instructor belonged to ST/SC or where some ST/SC learners joined the AECs.
- 9) It was observed that in the sample AECs, about 1.1 per cent of the learners were below 15 years and 7.6 p.c. of them were above 35 years. Since the programme aims at the age-group 15-35 years, a departure from this norm must be viewed in the context of its magnitude as well as the prevalent casual attitude among the target group regarding exactness in their age.
- 10) As per the records maintained at the sample AECs, 84 per cent of the learners were occupied in agriculture, 4.5 per cent of them were self-employed, and the rest were mostly non-workers. In the sample of 530 learners interviewed for this study, the proportion of non-workers, mostly women, is slightly higher. A detailed classification of occupation of the learners included in this study indicates the need for the AECs to record the economic activities of the learners in greater details.
- 11) There seems to be a wide range of difference in performance. It was observed that 59 per cent of the learners had acquired the skill to write and another 15.5 per cent could scribble their names. Female learners seem to have fared a little better as compared to their male counterparts. In arithmetic, 38.3 per cent were rated as good, 40.6 per cent as average and 21.1 per cent poor. This is probably to be expected.
- 12) It was observed that 16.04 of the learners had the benefit of some schooling prior to attending the AECs.
- 13) It is more difficult to examine the learners' achievement in terms of social awareness and functionality which are the two other basic com-

ponents of NAEP. For one thing, it is hard to construct appropriate objective tests relating to these aspects. For the other, it is difficult to disentangle AECs' contribution from that of mass media and the like. Nevertheless, the study provided for some questions in the learners' questionnaire so as to get an idea about their achievement in terms of social awareness and functionality. \ Favourable response to the questions of this type varied from 44.04 to 68.38 per cent. / The level of achievement on the part of learners seems to be on the lower side. There is reason to believe that the AECs are least equipped to deal with these two components of the NAEP. It was observed that one half of the instructors, and in one specific case 89 per cent, had not received any teaching materials relating to many important aspects of social awareness and functionality. This is understandable, but the point to emphasize is that if the NAEP is to succeed in achieving its stated objectives, this is one of the areas which deserves much greater attention than given to it at present, particularly from the VAs and the SRC.

- 14) More than half [55.37 per cent] of the instructors were having education below S.S.C., and one-fifth had passed the S.S.C. Examination. As far as training is concerned, 80.23 per cent of the instructors are reported to have received training of some form or other for teaching at the AECs. It appears that the motivation level of a large segment of the instructors was high.
- 15) It was observed that about 19 per

cent of the instructors had not received the remuneration regularly. While the reason could not be probed into within the study framework, this situation needs remedial action. About 61 per cent of the instructors felt that the amount of remuneration fixed for them was inadequate. This question deserves some attention from the policy makers.

- 16) It was observed that there was much to be desired in matters of organizational and environmental inputs of the AECs, such as place of AECs, physical facilities like lighting arrangement, sitting arrangements etc. The NAEP depends, of necessity, on utilizing the available public building facilities in the community, such as school buildings, panchayat buildings, community halls, etc. In the present sample, only about 28 per cent of the AECs were found to be held in public buildings; an equal percentage of the AECs were found to be held in open space and about 37 per cent were held in the instructor's house. The latter two places of holding the AECs are far from the ideal for proper functioning. The organizers will do well if serious thoughts are given to this aspect before the actual launching of the AECs.

On the whole, the Programme in Gujarat was generally found to be addressed to the target groups kept in view under the NAEP, and to have some other commendable aspects also. All things considered, its achievement in terms of spread of literacy is rather modest; more so, in terms of social awareness and functionality.